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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the professional training implications due, in most part, to the impact of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142). It describes funding patterns and efforts to meet the need for more trained professionals. Issues related to these trends are probed and recommendations for an interrelated approach to the problems are suggested. (Author)

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Mainstreaming Professional Personnel--

Where Are We Going?

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Abstract

This paper discusses the professional training implications due, for the most part, to the impact of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. It describes funding patterns and efforts to meet the need for more trained professionals. Issues related to these trends are probed and recommendations for an interrelated approach to the problems are suggested.

Mainstreaming Professional Personnel--Where Are We Going?

Introduction

National and international movements to mainstream or integrate handicapped children have had, are having, and will continue to have significant impact on preparation of professional personnel who are to work with these children. Historically, the foundation of theoretical and applied training for teachers of handicapped children emanated from those special schools and programs assigned this responsibility. Later, normal schools, colleges, and universities assumed more and more responsibility for the academics and worked cooperatively with the schools for practicum. This evolution, though somewhat similar to public or regular education, was different, in that it carried to these training institutions the tenets and concepts to develop teacher competencies that had been developed over the years at special schools. Moreover, these competencies were primarily geared toward the sensory or severely handicapped child, since, by and large, the mildly handicapped did not appear in these programs until perhaps the 1930s, and then, only in small numbers. It was mainly after the '50s that this population was recognized or identified, and the numbers of "special" children grew by leaps and bounds.

This growing number of children being served and those still unserved have stimulated efforts to "close the gap." These efforts are evident in the federal mandate a) to place handicapped children in the least restrictive environment and b) to provide more teachers with the necessary training to accept them in this environment (which is considered by most as the regular school).

Basically, the provisions of the mandate that have direct implications for personnel preparation programs are: a) the right to a free and appropriate public education, b) the least restrictive environment, c) the individualized education

program, d) the comprehensive system of personnel preparation, and 3) the general programming and procedural requirements of the laws. The five provisions represent an enormous force calling for the restructuring and reconceptualizing of the mission and role to be assumed by specialized personnel preparation programs.

Legislative Impact

The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped estimates that there is need for an additional 250,000 special education teachers, retraining of 100,000 such teachers because of student population shifts, and an additional 250,000 regular education personnel (Siantz and Moore, 1977), This comes to a total of 600,000 to be trained by 1980!

Other ramifications which must be considered are the severely handicapped children, many of whom will now be in the regular school system. This population will pose a severe strain on teachers, especially in areas where there are few specialized teachers. With the need for developing individualized educational programs, teachers will become, in a sense, diagnosticians, able to isolate learning problems and prescribe instructional programs.

Addressing the Need

Some of the developments from the federal level to address this problem include:

1. the provision in the law for a "comprehensive system of personnel development."
2. Currently, most special educators are prepared at one of the 615 specialized training centers across the nation. Yet this approach will not be adequate to fill the demand for trained teachers.
3. Since 1974, the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped has been funding Dean's Grants Projects designed to develop and implement innovative approaches for infusing special education coursework and other special education experiences within the core of general education. (Approximately 90 such grants have been awarded for a total of $3.2 million in 1977.)

4. The Division of Personnel Preparation (BEH) has established priorities which clearly depict direction. By comparing the funding levels of special education preservice, special education inservice, regular education preservice, and regular education inservice, an interesting and significant trend is evident. Figure 1 shows the projected funding levels for 1978 and 1980 in the areas of special education preservice, regular education preservice (Dean's Grants), special education inservice, and regular education inservice. The special education preservice was decreased by 10.5 per cent from the 1977 level. Special education inservice increased by 30.5 per cent from the 1977 level. The Dean's Grants increased by $ .2 million, and the projection for regular education inservice by 1980 shows an increase of an estimated $20 million. (The graph does not illustrate special project funding, etc.)

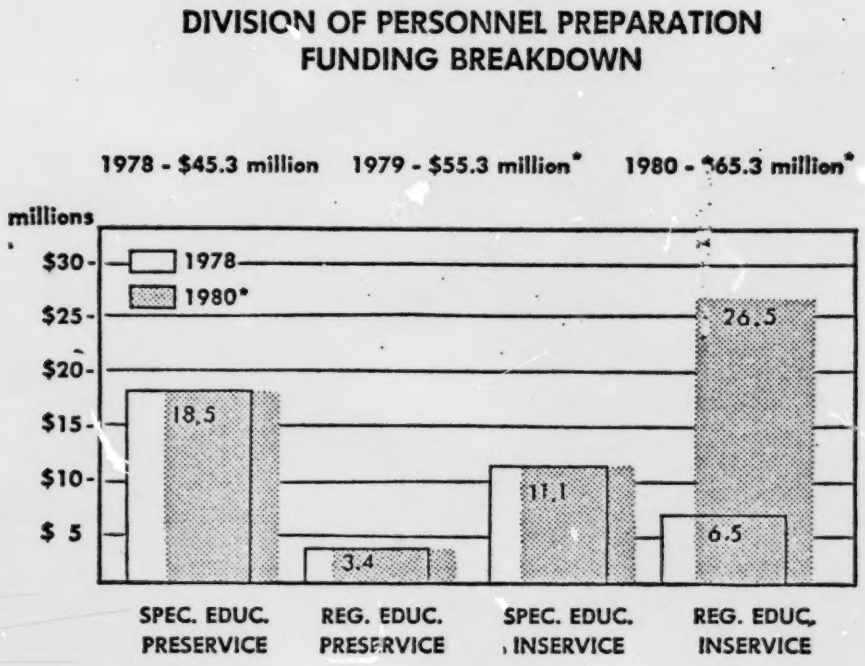


FIGURE 1

Training Implications

What are the implications for those specialized training centers? Clearly, a stabilization or reduction of federal support and also increasing numbers of teachers will need to acquire skills not to teach a self-contained class of homogeneously grouped handicapped students but to provide learning experiences through individualized educational programs to handicapped children integrated into the mainstream of our educational system. There are those in the field serving the sensory, severely, and profoundly handicapped who fear that the necessary funds to support programs to train personnel to work with these low incidence populations will not be available as BEH moves to make more funds available to serve the needs of the mainstreamed handicapped child. BEH maintains that it intends to continue special and careful planning to meet the needs of the deaf, the blind, multiply handicapped, and profoundly handicapped (Harvey, 1976). The personnel needs for these populations will continue to be met by specialized training programs. However, the funding shifts, priorities, and reduction of funds to special training institutions, as well as the conceptual framework for expected competencies and activities to be developed and included by these centers have made for some confusion and feelings of insecurity.

Some Reactions

Since the law clearly affects regular education and the teachers therein, organizations of these teachers have reacted both negatively and positively to the legislation. In general, organizations such as the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers have agreed that the law is just and that handicapped children are entitled to a free and appropriate education. Both organizations, though, have analyzed the realities of the law's implementation. For example, NEA Resolution 77-33 (1977) makes clear that they are concerned about a) adequate preparation to work with these children, b) class size (they have even suggested the weighting formula used in Lodi, California and Denver, Colorado of 1--normal to

2.5--severe), and c) appeal process and the rights, role, and responsibility of the teacher (the law deals with children's and parents' rights, not with teachers' rights; the underlying concern is what happens if the IEP does not result in achieved objectives).

In the recently completed report from the NEA, "A Study Report--Education for All Handicapped Children: Consensus, Conflict, and Challenge," (1978), the study group selected three states--Iowa, Georgia, and California--which have had state legislation similar to the federal and, hence, some experience in implementation of similar startegies. Forty-three schools were visited, including special education schools, treatment centers, and residential as well as regular education schools. The report of the panel highlights some teachers' comments which are rather graphic, e.g.

> . . . disillusioning and difficult. For one whole school year, I had in one English class a boy who was all but totally deaf. His needs and demands were so overwhelming that he took 59 per cent of my teaching time, energy, and creativity--leaving 34 other students scavenging for crumbs.

Another pertinent finding of the panel was that in each state there was

> . . . very little coordination between the teacher education institutions and the public schools for the purpose of providing adequate inservice--schools and preservice programs in special education.

This finding raises the question of the effectiveness of the Dean's Grants and the shifts in federal support to inservice training of regular teachers. It also questions the initiatives of special training institutions to become more involved. Another serious concern of regular teachers is the time required to be diagnosticians. Gregory A. Humphrey (1977) of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, has asked:

> . . . where will the extra time come from for teachers to participate in [IEP]

> meetings. . . . Will existing collective bargaining agreements be violated to increase the school day by the amount of time necessary to handle various meetings and placement hearings, as well as the ever increasing amount of paper work generated by the IEP requirements.

A shared concern of the NEA and the AFT is that the mainstreaming thrust will dismantle existing special education classes and programs. Rauth points out:

> Integration in the regular classroom will be beneficial to some exceptional children and will allow them to live fuller, more normal lives. Yet it is imperative not be carried away by idealism. Those who advocate abolishing special education classes, regional resource centers, and residential institutions altogether ignore many realities.

To be sure, we are faced with a "mixed bag." Some handicapped children truly require a special program, special facilities, support services, and well trained teachers. Mainstreaming to many is synonymous with deinstitutionalization. Unfortunately, the more aggressive proponents of this concept have failed to see the role of the "institution" and, moreover, have an archaic perception of what it does and can offer.

A recent study by Brill (1975) on prelingually and profoundly hearing impaired children has indicated that very few of these children are truly mainstreamed. Parents often insist on regular school placement, though educators, etc. may recommend otherwise. Lack of the resources necessary for adequate supervision of the regular teacher was a common complaint of these teachers. This only augments the previously mentioned teacher comments. They are desperately in need of help.

If we assume that there is a place for special schools, special classes, and residential programs, professional personnel who will work with these children in these settings must possess certain skills which cannot be obtained in six credit hours or a one class per week inservice. These programs generally have an enroll-

ment of moderately to profoundly handicapped children who, for the most part, are not from the higher socio-economic strata (Karchmer and Trybus, 1977). It is, without question, this population which, when mainstreamed, will "raise the hackles" of the regular education personnel.

The law is so all-encompassing and virtually "fool-proof" that, though the course is charted in a rights and economics direction, a great many problems will surface that will require much cohesion and cooperation to resolve.

If we look at the past personnel paradigm, it would look like this (Figure 2):

TRADITIONAL MODEL OF PERSONNEL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

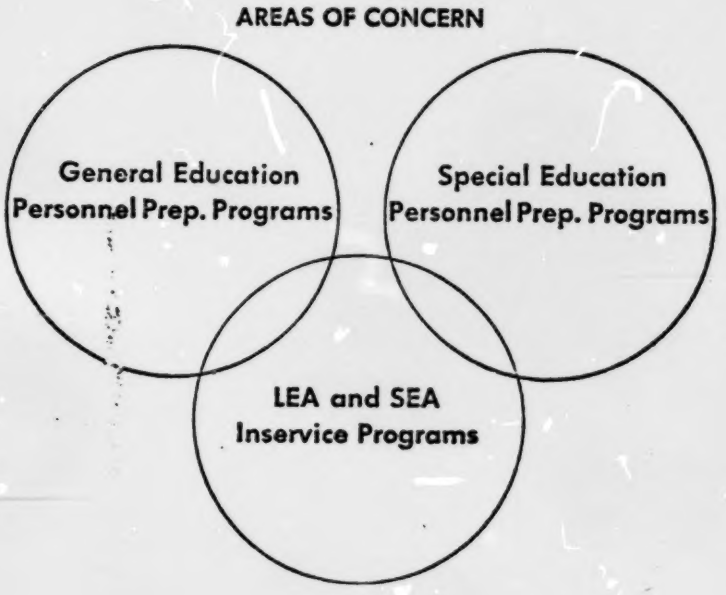
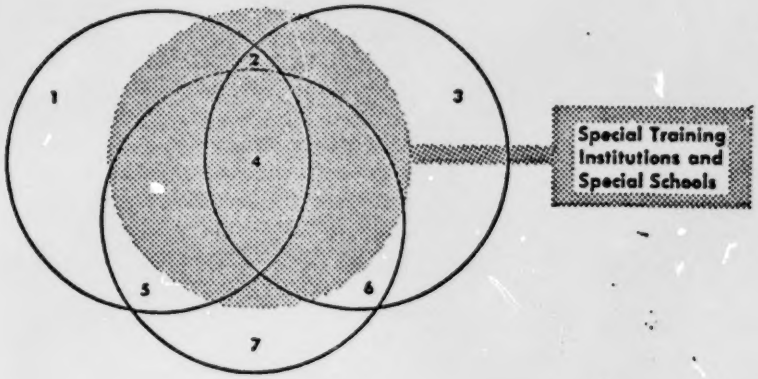

AREAS OF CONCERN
General Education Personnel Prep. Programs
Special Education Personnel Prep. Programs
LEA and SEA Inservice Programs

FIGURE 2

Figure 2, depicts the existing conditions which have three separate and distinct components involved with personnel preparation: the general education component, the special education component, and the LEA/SEA component. As can be seen by the small amount of overlap of the circles, the three components rarely coordinate their efforts.

We should strongly be considering a mix which would appear like this (Figure 3):

RECONCEPTUALIZED MODEL OF INTERRELATEDNESS OF PERSONNEL PREPARATION PROGRAMS



1 General Education Preservice
2 Integrated Preservice
3 Special Education Preservice
4 Special Education Inservice
5 General Education Inservice
6 Special Education Inservice
7 LEA and SEA Training Concerns

FIGURE 3

This interdisciplinary approach to personnel preparation will need to overcome existing barriers to cooperation that now exist. Figure 3 depicts the future conditions which would have three interrelated and interdependent components involved with personnel preparation.

Conclusion--Where Are We Going?

In a small way, the explosion of day classes for the hearing impaired in the state of California (and perhaps other states) during the 1950s and '60s is similar to the transition in personnel preparation we are now experiencing. When these classes sprung up like mushrooms, parents and educators were most anxious to have their children in them (the "normalization" syndrome). During this period, there was little coordination from the state level. Small classes with children of varying ages with untrained teachers were very common. The situation required a good

10-20 years to stabilize. During this period, a large number of hearing impaired children fell victim to this disorganization, to a system in transition.

Efforts by states and investment of funds from the federal level are a partial answer, but the pell-mell move to the regular school will result in a good many slightly-exposed and barely trained teachers. This is unfair to handicapped children and to the professional educator.

In the attempt to "normalize" programs for handicapped children, personnel preparation is being normalized in that it is shifting to training environments heretofore not involved in this arena and to inservice training.

Professional organizations in special education such as ASHA, CED, AAMD, etc. have worked long and hard to develop professional standards. These standards require rigorous training. Can we really expect regular teachers to meet these standards in short-term and inservice training?

It seems that very valuable resources for quality training are being ignored--that is, the specialized training institution and the special or residential school. In such programs, the concentration has been <u>entirely</u> on handicapped children and special education. These programs have a great deal to offer the "new" training centers, etc. It will be regrettable, indeed, if the value of these resources is recognized only when they have ceased to exist due to "trends."

The whole issue must be approached carefully and realistically. A spirit of cooperation and sharing of resources must exist. The solution is not more professionals for less but <u>better</u> professionals. Too much is at stake.

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